



NEWSLETTER №9

*Activities of the Georgian National Platform
Of the Eastern Partnership Civil Society Forum*

September-October, 2014



The Newsletter has been prepared in the framework of
a EU-funded Project
“Strengthening and Capacity Building of Georgian National Platform
For the Eastern Partnership“

Joint Activities of the Georgian National Platform

On October 22, 2014 Eastern Partnership Civil Society Forum Georgian National Platform organized Ukraine support rally outside the Embassy of Ukraine. Parallel rallies were held in Tbilisi, Zugdidi and Batumi. The main purpose was to express sincere solidarity to the Ukrainian people, support country's European aspirations, its sovereignty and territorial integrity.



Participants brought the flags of EU, Ukraine and Georgia, as well as red umbrellas as a symbol of the people who died in Ukraine as a result of the Russian aggression. There were lit candles and people sang national anthem of the Ukraine.

On October 10, 2014 Eastern Partnership Civil Society Forum Georgian National Platform signed Memorandum of Understanding with the Medical Centre “CITO” in support of Ukrainian refugees affected by the armed conflict.

In the framework of the Memorandum Georgian National Platform provided the humanitarian aid to the Medical Center, "Cito" for Ukrainian refugees temporarily residing in Georgia.



The memorandum was signed by the Chairman of Georgian National Platform Lasha Tughushi, Director of the Medical Center "Cito", Natia Shavdia and Head of Department for the Management and Coordination of Emergency of the Ministry of Labour, Health and Social Affairs of Georgia, Zurab Utiashvili. The event was attended by the representatives of Georgian National Platform and the Embassy of Ukraine in Georgia.

Within the framework of the project “Strengthening and Capacity Building of Georgian National Platform for the Eastern Partnership” informational meetings held by the partner organizations in the regions of Georgia.

The main goal of the meetings was to raise awareness of local population on the EU integration process, significance of signing of Association Agreement, positive outcomes and commitments to be done by Georgia.

On 13 October, 2014 Association Green Alternative organized regional meeting in Stepantsminda, Kazbegi Municipality on the topic "EU Energy Policy and Challenges to face Georgia” with the special focus on the importance of EU Georgia Association Agreement, its impact on energy policy of Georgia, also compliance of new energy projects with EU standards and decision making process.

Center for strategic Research and Development of Georgia conducted informational meeting on October 29, 2014 in Telavi. The meeting was devoted to the implications of Association Agreement and DCFTA for food safety in Georgia. The participants were made aware of the stricture

and content of Association Agreement and DCFTA, as well as the National Strategy on Food Safety developed in the process of DCFTA negotiations and upgraded recently. The short overview of the history and principles of food safety in EU was presented and discussed using specific examples from Georgian reality.

The Georgian Young Lawyers' Association held informational meetings in the region of Gori (29 October) and Akhalkalaki (30 October). During the meetings special emphasis was placed on the following topics: state strategy on migration and action plan, readmission, domestic violence, state policy towards domestic violence, legal aid for the victims of domestic violence and local self-governance reform.

Working Group I (WG1 -Democracy, Human Rights, Good Governance & Stability)

Challenges of hate speech in traditional and digital media and online security issues were discussed at the International Media ethics Day 2014 workshop organized by Media Development Foundation (MDF) in partnership with Ilia State University and UN Association of Georgian (UNAG) on 19 September at Ilia State University in Tbilisi, Georgia.



It is the first time when Georgia joined the IMED, organized by the Center for International Media Ethics (CIME) annually since 2011. 50 countries participated in IMED 2014.

See more: http://www.mdfgeorgia.ge/eng/view_news/293

Media Development Foundation - MDF, Ilia State University and United Nations Association of Georgia - UNAG have established an annual Award of Tolerance for media outlets, journalists and bloggers who contribute to the culture of tolerance and ensure ethical coverage of diversity issues.



Award of Tolerance for 2014 was granted to Vakho Sanaia, journalist of TV company Maestro for TV report on antidiscrimination law; Radio Free Liberty for program Gender Stories; TV company Rustavi 2 for TV series My Wife's Friends; Levan Sutidze, journalist of TV company Tabula for talk show "Talks about Religion"; Kakheti Information Center for coverage of human rights in regional media; Gia Mariamidze, blogger of the internet portal Netgazeti.ge for the blog "Chronicles of Announced Holiday" and Nino Baidauri, blogger of the internet portal Liberali.ge for the blog "Distinctiveness as a lie and injustice".

See more: http://www.mdfgeorgia.ge/eng/view_news/291

The seminar "Georgia-EU - the role of media in coverage of the European Union issues" was held on October 19, at Frontline Georgia Club within the frame of the joint project of Georgian Institute of Public Affairs (GIPA) and European Journalism Centre (EJC).



Media Development Foundation (MDF) presented electronic resource - <http://www.eurocommunicator.ge> - which includes Myths Detectors - thematic researches on misinformation about EU disseminated by or via media.

See more : http://mdfgeorgia.ge/geo/view_news/305

On September 11 Human Rights Center published a statement: Human Rights Center Requests Remove Top Secret Status from the Cases of Former Political Prisoners Charged for Espionage. The Center appeals to the MIA to remove Top Secret status from the cases of political prisoners convicted for espionage.

On September 18 nongovernmental organizations responded to the postpone of introduction of jury trials. According to the statement, the Parliament of Georgia should thoroughly examine the issue of the postponement of jury trials and require the government to present a concrete plan of implementation for this initiative. Human Rights Center also joined the statement.

On September 23 six nongovernmental organizations addressed to the Parliament of Georgia and requested to promptly form working group on election issues for the improvement of election environment in Georgia and for the absolute harmonization of the national legislation with international standards. Members of the Parliament and Government of Georgia, as well as representatives of all parties (political parties, international and local observation organizations, election administration) will take active part in the activities of the working group. Human Rights Center joined the address.

On September 18 nongovernmental organizations Human Rights Center, Article 42 of the Constitution, Transparency International – Georgia and Public Advocacy held joint press-conference about illegal dismissal of patrol inspector Ioseb Abuladze.

On October 6 Human Rights Center spread address to the government of Georgia about legal problems of aliens in Georgia. Human Rights Center calls on the Government of Georgia to get interested in the legal status of aliens and make the ground of non-granted residence documents available for them. The concrete addresses of the petition are: Ministry of Justice, Counter-Intelligence Department of MIA, Parliament of Georgia and Government of Georgia.

On October 3 executive director of the Center, together with the leaders of other CSOs, met President Giorgi Margvelashvili about the bill on surveillance. CSOs recommended to the President to use veto if the Parliament adopts the law on postponing the discussion of the bill before next spring.

On October 11-12 Human Rights Center participated in the conference of the Coalition for Independent and Transparent Judiciary in Gudauri. The Center is member of the Coalition's steering committee. The conference participants planned priorities of the next year. Working groups on judiciary, criminal law reform and judiciary shortcomings were set up. Human Rights Center will be represented in all three working groups.

On October 17 representatives of Human Rights Center participated in the demonstration in support of arrested human rights defenders in Azerbaijan. The demonstration was organized by HRHT in the Heydar Aliyev square in Tbilisi. Representatives of other organization, besides the HRHT member organizations, also participated in the demonstration. The participants marched to the Azerbaijan embassy from the square, where they talked with the representatives of the embassy and handed the statement text. The demonstration was highlighted by Radio Liberty/Free Europe.

Working Group 2 (WG2 - Economic Integration and Convergence with the EU Policies)

During 18-21 September, at the hotel Kapiloni (kapiloni.ge) in Misaktsieli/Georgia, the four-day 2nd stage of the project “School of Progressive Ideas” was held. Stage included 25 young participants who became a winner of 1st stage of the project. During 1st stage, participants were

selected from different regions of Georgia (total number: 230 youngsters) and project organizers provided 2 day seminars about “Basics of Social-Democracy” for them in different cities of Georgia.

2nd stage seminar included topics about main aspects and models of social-democracy, its values and principals, also main economic theories and global economical tendencies. Seminar session involved local and international experts, members of NGOs and governmental bodies. Under the seminar frame Deputy Secretary General of Party of European Socialists - Giacomo FILIBECK made a speech about contemporary agenda of social-democracy in Europe as well as in the world. Also, sessions involved special guests: Regional Director South Caucasus of The Friedrich Ebert Stiftung - Julia Bläsius and experts from Institute of Democracy and Social Progress of Ukraine – Bogdan Ferens and Kateryna Vezieliava.

Under the frames of the 2nd stage, authors of 4 best policy papers will have a study trip during November 30 – December 4 2014 in Berlin, Germany where they will get an opportunity to learn how successful social-democratic institutions work in a real political process and how these principles could be transferred to the national state policy. They will hold meetings with Social-Democratic Party of Germany (SPD), Youth Wing of SPD (Jusos in der SPG); also with The Friedrich Ebert Stiftung and Trade Unions of Germany. Besides, participants will have opportunities to meet with MPs of Bundestag and members of Mayors Office of Berlin.

On October 10, 2014 “Fund of Women Entrepreneurs” together with young volunteers joined to environmental event-action under the slogan: "We take care of the environment together."

The main goal of the environmental initiative is to make society realize that our living environment, its cleanliness and health, first and foremost, depends on us! It begins from each of us, from the yard, from the street, in the workplace, as "the basis of our existence is the ecological balance“.



October 30, it was finished “Administrative proceedings and business etiquette norms” 5month courses, organized by Fund of Women Entrepreneurs in Poti. This is already the third group in this town which studied for free: English language, proceedings, computer programs and accounting. Now 15 women were given certificates testifying that they were given knowledge.



Women of "Volunteer Center", existed on the basis of the Fund of Women Entrepreneurs , in Tsageri , high mountainous region of Georgia, assisted workers who are building the church in cleaning of the surrounding area .



On October 30, 2014, in Poti Sakrebulo/city council conference hall it was held a forum “Unemployment Problems in Georgia and Rights of the Employees”.



The forum was attended by representatives of NGO, Poti self-government, media and Mayor office; teachers and trainers and pupils also of "School of Women" of the Fund of Women Entrepreneurs.

Working Group 3 (WG3 - Environment, Climate Change and Energy Security)

Activities and interim outcomes of the project "Integrated Hotspots Management and Saving the Living Black Sea Ecosystem – HOT BLACK SEA (HBS) have disseminated by the Foundation Caucasus Environment at the celebration of the Black Sea Day which has been hold at the IASON Workshop 2 and Caravan Events at the Radisson Blu hotel in Batumi, Georgia, on 30-31 October 2014. The Workshop and Caravan Events in Georgia of 30-31 October 2014 have collocated with EC FP7 IASON Consortium Meeting in Batumi and Cross Border Cooperation ILMM-BSE Project Meeting in Georgia and have organized in synergy by these two European funded regional research and coordination projects.



The second day event, held in conjunction with the International Black Sea Day (31 October) have promoted by the Black Sea Commission Permanent Secretariat and facilitated by the Ministry of Environment and Natural Resources Protection of Georgia.

The plenary session consisted of series presentations of various European and other international projects in the Black Sea river basin and catchment management under implementation in Georgia and elsewhere in the Black Sea Basin and Caucasus. FCE has presented (M. Devidze) the project “HOT BLACK SEA” at the Black Sea Day - Plenary Session on 31 October 2014.

The event attended representatives of Ministry of Environment and Natural Resources Protection of Georgia (Nino Tskhadadze, Department of International Relations), National Environmental Agency (Marina Arabidze, Department of Monitoring of Environmental Pollution), Batumi Centre of Fisheries and the Black Sea Monitoring (Irina Baramidze), Rector of Batumi Shota Rustaveli State University, representatives of Batumi Municipality and other stakeholders and local authorities. “Hot Black Sea” project stakeholders from Batumi Centre of Fisheries and the Black Sea Monitoring at the Black Sea Day Celebration have shared the project outcomes.

On September 26, 2014 Ilia State University hosted the next workshop from a series of Energy Policy and Sustainability Seminars organized by WEG in collaboration with Institute of Energy and Sustainable Development (IESD) of Ilia State University. The seminar was devoted to – Development of Mechanisms for the Promotion of Renewable Energy Sources.

WEG’s director, Murman Margvelashvili reviewed Renewable Energy sources, spoke about their importance in modern energy systems development and the need for systems approach in their development. Researcher Nino Maghradze presented world best practices of Renewable Energy development and Mechanisms for their Promotion. More specifically, she discussed Feed-in Tariffs, green certificates and competitive auctions.



Researcher Giorgi Mukhigulishvili spoke about EU 2009/28 / EC Directive on Renewable Energy and its introduction in Energy Community countries. He reviewed the main conditions and challenges of the directive implementation.

The seminar was highly interactive. Presentations and discussions highlighted the positive externalities of Renewable Energy development. First of all, it is a clean technology and reduces greenhouse gas emissions; it also has a positive effect on employment, GDP growth, and development of research and innovation in the countries.

Working Group 4 (Contacts between People)

On 15 September 2014, WG4 Coordinators, together with the Chairman of the Georgian National Platform, National Coordinator and Coordinators of the rest working groups, met with the representatives of the Section for External Relations of the European Economic and Social Committee (EESC) being with an exploratory mission in Georgia. The meeting took place in the premises of the European Union Delegation in Tbilisi and aimed to discuss the setting up, including the structure and composition, of the Civil Society Platform, foreseen in the political provisions of the EU-Georgia Association Agreement (Article 409). Furthermore, discussions also went on the establishment and functioning of the domestic advisory group, which under the DCFTA part of the Association Agreement is tasked with advising on issues relating to the Chapter of trade and sustainable development (Article 240).

On 23 September 2014, the WG4 coordinator, Alexandra Kalatozishvili met with Mr. Paata Zakareishvili, the State Minister of Georgia on Reconciliation and Civic Equality. The meeting was held in the framework of the visit of Mr. Enver Djuliman and Mr. Ole Benny Lileas to Georgia, Norwegian Helsinki Committee representatives. The attendees discussed the current situation in the South Caucasus region, as well as already undertaken and possible efforts for the rebuilding of trust between conflict affected societies.

Coordinators and youth sub-group members continued the work for the preparation of the Youth Side Event to be held in Georgia on 17-19 November, 2014 prior to the Eastern Partnership Civil Society Forum. Regular online coordination meetings were held with participation of the WG4 Coordinator Nikolai Kvantaliani and the organizers of the 2013 Youth Side Event in Chisinau. In order to inform the international

community about planned activity and to look for the possible ways for cooperation within the framework of the event, series of meetings were held with the heads of diplomatic corps and international organizations accredited in Georgia, as well as foundations and private companies. In particular, the WG4 and Youth sub-group coordinators to have met and conducted negotiations with the following potential partners/supporters:

- "Open Society - Georgia" Foundation (12September, 2014- Mr.IvaneChkhikvadze, European Integration program coordinator)
- Bank "Cartu" (phone communication with Mr. NodarJavakhishvili, Director General)
- Embassy of Switzerland to Georgia (el-correspondence with Mr. Florian Gubler,Counselor)
- Embassy of the Kingdom of the Netherlands to Georgia (18 September, 2014- Ambassador Extraordinary and Plenipotentiary, H.E. Mr.HansHorbach and Mr.JanHuisman, Policy Officer)
- Embassy of Estoniato Georgia (23 September, 2014- Ambassador Extraordinary and Plenipotentiary, H.E. Mr. Priit Turk)
- Embassy of Lithuania to Georgia (24 September, 2014- Ambassador Extraordinary and Plenipotentiary, H.E. Mr. Jonas Paslauskas)
- Eurasia Partnership Foundation (24September, 2014 - Mr.VakhtangKobaladze, Program Manager)
- Black Sea Trust for Regional Cooperation (27 September, 2014 - Ms.NinoLiluashvili, Program Coordinator)
- Georgia Palace Hotel (2 October, 2014 - Ms.MayaNadiradze, Front Office Manager,)
- Embassy of Latvia to Georgia (6October, 2014- Ambassador Extraordinary and Plenipotentiary, H.E. Mrs. ElitaGavele)
- Embassy of Italyto Georgia (7 October, 2014- Mr.Eugenio Carlucci, Deputy Head of Mission Ambassador)
- Embassy of Sweden to Georgia (10 October, 2014 - Ambassador Extraordinary and Plenipotentiary, H.E.Mrs.Martina Quick)
- Polish Embassy to Georgia (16 October, 2014- Ambassador Extraordinary and Plenipotentiary, H.E. Mr.AndrzejCieszkowski and Mr.MaciejChrzanowski, Second secretary on Economic Issues)
- Ministry of Sport and Youth Affairs (20 October, 2014- Mr.RatiBregadze, Deputy Minister)

“Multinational Georgia” has started implementation of the project “Development of civil society in ethnic minority populated regions of Georgia” which is supported by the National Endowment for Democracy (NED).



The action is specially designed to strengthen the role of civil societal actors in Akhalkalaki and Ninotsminda (Samtskhe-Javakheti region) as well as in Tsalka (Kvemo Kartli region) municipalities in advocating, sensitization and lobbying the issues, problems and challenges vulnerable groups are facing in the local areas. To this end, in August 2014, the project team has paid visits to project targeted regions and carried out informational meetings with local stakeholders, while on 2-6 October, 2014 the capacity building training program was organized in Kobuleti, Georgia for project attracted 15 startups on organization building and operation.

See more: <http://pmmg.org.ge/index.php?m=4&nid=103>

In the period from 7 to 15 October, 2014 the fifth round of seminars (three 3-days events) on the topic “Advocacy and Planning the Advocacy Campaign” was held in Kobuleti, Georgia within the framework of the “Coalition for Trust” project - a three-year regional program funded by the European Commission and co-funded by the Norwegian Ministry of Foreign Affairs, and implemented in partnership with Public Movement Multinational Georgia.



The events were attended by representatives of three different target groups – journalists, students and civil activists.

See more: <http://pmmg.org.ge/?m=4&nid=104&lang=Geo>

Association "Peaceful and Business Caucasus" (APBC), with a financial support of a joint EU/UNDP initiative COBERM 2 in August 2014 started the project: "We support conflict affected communities to keep them in better health".

Project beneficiaries are economically and socially vulnerable people permanently reside in Abkhazia and South Ossetia,(Mainly ethnic Abkhazians and Ossetians) who have less access to qualified medical services. At the I phase of the project (01.08.14-31.10.14) qualified medical services were provided to 82 patients living in the conflict zones.

The Youth Union "EuroClub", working on the base of "Student-Youth Council" implements the action "In support of Ukraine". The stickers have been printed, where Georgian and Ukrainian flags are displayed in the form of the heart. We apply to the population to buy the mentioned stickers though the price adoptive for them, but the delivered money will be used for the purchasing of medical materials for one frontier by the assistance of our partner organisation "Center for European Initiatives".



Working Group 5 (Social dialogue and Partnership)

On the 9th of October, GTUC President Irakli Petriashvili traveled to Poland on a special invitation and participated in the “Solidarność” congress that was organized in Poland, city of Bielsko-Biala. The congress participants included the ITUC President Jaap Wienen and ETUC General Secretary Bernadette Ségol.

The GTUC President Irakli Petriashvili spoke at the congress focusing on the importance of partnership between the Georgian and Polish governments as well as trade unions and perspectives for the future.



“We felt your support in 2008 during the Russian military aggression and we felt your support when we helped the people in the conflict zone together. We felt your support during the period when the neo-liberal administration of Georgia was trying to destroy trade unions and was going after union leaders, which has kept us from integrating with European structures.”

October 13, 2014 - We will know which companies and organizations are adhering to the labor law and if the worker rights are protected in the nearest future.

According to the statement made by the Georgian Trade Unions Confederation President Irakli Petriashvili, the GTUC has finished researching in this issue and will make the results of the study public in a presentation.

The GTUC began studying the labor market and worker conditions from March of 2014. In March the GTUC Vice President Gocha Aleksandria stated that the study should be done by an apolitical organization that has no ties to the government, encompass all sectors of employment and should include at least 50 companies.



Gocha Aleksandria announced a couple of months ago that despite changes made to the labor law, the workers are still suffering. According to his sources only a couple of big organizations chose to adhere to the law. Organizations like Zestafoni's "Pero", Rustavi's "Azoti" and terminals in Poti.

Labor law amendments passed in May of last year. The changes regulate long term and unconditional labor contracts, overtime rate and extra paid leaves in a new, more modernized way.

October 23, 2014 - the situation remains dire in Georgian Railway. Large part of the problems being faced by the Georgian railway employees have not been solved. The Georgian Railway Workers' New Trade Union, quite rationally, began a new labor dispute with the administration of JSC "Georgian Railway".



The labor dispute started because the administration has failed to fulfill the three points that forced the railway workers to strike for one day last year. These points are as follows:

1. Establishment of a new, just system of wages – which will be based on work experience, length of service and qualification.
2. Justified bonus system; establishment of the 13 pay.
3. Higher rate of pay for overtime work that will be determined through mutual agreement of the workers and the employer.

The aforementioned dispute foresees a 21 day agreement procedure timeline, which means that the government is to appoint a mediator. The unions are hoping that the government and the administration of the company will use every power they possess to propose resolutions that will agreeable for the workers and their families. Also, the country and the region will avoid even more powerful worker protest actions in this important company.

October 29, 2014 - a historically significant meeting was held in Tbilisi. The General Secretary of European Trade Unions Confederation (ETUC), Ms. Bernadette Ségol, who arrived in Tbilisi yesterday, met with the Georgian Trade Unions Confederation President Irakli Petriashvili and GTUC sectoral branch presidents at the GTUC conference hall. Participants of the meeting included the trade union representatives of the partner nations and this meeting held a regional status.



During the meeting our regional partners from Azerbaijan and Armenia addressed the participants, the sectoral union leaders spoke about the current issues. It is of no surprise that numerous problems were discussed, but the Georgian unionists believe that Ms. Bernadette Ségol's visits, together with visits of high rank officials will benefit the Georgian labor movement.

The Prime Minister thanked the ETUC for their significant efforts in defending labor rights of Georgians. According to his statement, ETUC has always supported Georgia's integration into the EU and was actively helping the Georgian unions, especially during the prior administration. In fact, it was Bernadette Ségol who organized numerous meetings in 2009-2012 where the EU Parliament's representatives met with the GTUC in Georgia and were introduced to the distressful situation that the nation was facing at the time.

October 31, 2014 - Public Servants Trade Union of Georgia's congress was organized for the 29th of October, 2014, in Tbilisi, at the "D Plaza" hotel. The congress was attended the ETUC General Secretary Bernadette Ségol, GTUC Persident Irakli Petraishvili and GTUC Vice-President Gocha Aleksandria.

During the speech Mr. Petriashvili underlined the importance of Ms. Bernadette Ségol's visit and the issues discussed during the meeting with the Prime Minister Irakli Gharibashvili (issues such as labor market and necessity for an encompassing labor law).



Bernadette Ségol listened to the control-revisionary report on work executed in the last quarter. Debates ensued and the delegates evaluated the report positively. Amendments were introduced in the Trade Union's internal code and a program for 2015-2018 was passed. The union elected Nugzar Chincharauli as their president and Manana Gelashvili as the Vice-President. Also, the union elected the control-revision committee and Giorgi Chachanidze was elected to the position of committee chairman.

State Concept on CSOs' Development

Working on the initial draft of the State Concept on CSO Development is completed. The Concept is a key program document on the CSO development policy, which aims to foster civil initiatives, set up environment required for the development of CSOs and ensure their real participation in the decision-making process.

By the Memorandum of Cooperation executed between the Parliament of Georgia and CSOs on 12 December 2013, the Parliament of Georgia undertook an obligation to draft and adopt the State Concept on CSO Development together with all interested parties. CSOs

have set up a working group for drafting the Concept, which included representatives of active CSOs (including regional organizations of Georgia) and parliamentary majority and minority. Conducting a participative process was one of the key tasks of the working group. To this end, the Civil Society Institute has organized public discussions of the document with CSOs operating in 8 cities of Georgia (Tbilisi, Kutaisi, Zugdidi, Ozurgeti, Batumi, Akhaltsikhe, Gori and Telavi). Based on the feedback received from regions and recommendations of international experts, the draft Concept was revised and improved. Further, the Concept was actively examined within the "CSOs' Development Effectiveness" sub-group of the Eastern Partnership Civil Society Forum.

To harmonize the opinions of all interested parties, the draft CSO Concept on CSO Development is already available on the CSO web portal and all interested parties are able to get familiar with the initial version of the Concept.

See more: <http://civilin.org/viewtopic.php?id=146>

